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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/07/2016

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SUBJECT: PREVAL TRAVELING TO CUBA FOR FURTHER MEDICAL TESTS

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRS THOMAS C. TIGHE FOR REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) President Preval will depart for Cuba on the afternoon of December 6 for further medical tests, according to Disarmament Commission President Alix Fils-Aime and President Preval's executive assistant in the palace. Fils-Aime on December 6 told Polcouns during a meeting on other topics that Preval's Cuban doctors had seen something in a test during his just-concluded visit to Cuba and asked him to return. Fils-Aime did not think it was a heart problem, though he added that he had no direct knowledge. According to Fils-Aime, Preval would be gone "a minimum of 72 hours." Fils-Aime stated that he did not think the palace would inform the public until after Preval's departure and judged this to be a mistake. Independently, Preval's executive secretary informed the Econoff, who called to confirm the schedule for upcoming CODEL Engle, that Preval was leaving Haiti "for medical reasons" and that Preval was not expected to return before Sunday, December 10. Thus, she was unwilling to commit the President to a Monday, December 11 meeting with the Codel.

¶2. (SBU) Polcouns on December 4 witnessed Preval's return to Haiti from Cuba at the Cap Haitien airport and spoke to him briefly. Preval appeared to be in good health and good spirits. Preval was also in good form when visiting with Senator Mike DeWine in Port-au-Prince on November 29.

¶3. (C) Fils-Aime's worries are well-founded. If President Preval follows his usual pattern of releasing little information regarding his condition and travel, his departure will lead to an explosion of speculation and rumors among Haiti's extensive chattering classes. If his condition is, in fact, serious, the situation will require especially deft management of public affairs from Preval and his staff, a skill they have not demonstrated so far during this administration.  
TIGHE